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Fund Raiser

She Can Show Experts

By Dorothy McCordle

WHEN it comes to fund-raising, Mrs. Raymond FitzGerald, wife of a Washington government official and mother of three, can teach top flight financiers a trick or two.

Single-handed, Barbara FitzGerald has raised \$349,000 to help other people's children break out from a desolate world of silence. These are aphasic children, youngsters with normal brains and normal hearing who cannot talk.

By September, she confidently expects to have raised \$26,000 more. This sum will round out the \$375,000 needed to complete a new building for the School for Aphasic Children, which has been quietly opening up new worlds to 'sadly afflicted' children for the past four years. It is a part of the Children's Hearing and Speech Center here, affiliated with Children's Hospital.

Forty aphasic children can be taught and studied in the new classroom building. Research into the cause and cure of aphasia will be conducted. Trainees will come from all over the country to interne at the school.

Mrs. FitzGerald's job will not be over with the completion of the new building. She will then launch into a one-woman endowment drive for the school.

Her golden touch has lifted the school deficit annually, while it has been operating in classrooms lent by St. Alban's Church, next door to the National Cathedral. She has raised \$20,000 a year just for such emergencies.

CHIC and glamorous Barbara FitzGerald has raised these astonishing sums of money without resorting to the usual charity balls, theater benefits or other good cause gimmicks.

The upcoming benefit on Monday at Arena Stage is apart from the one woman efforts of Mrs. FitzGerald and is not for the building fund. This is the opening night performance of William Saroyan's "The Time of Your Life" under the patronage of Mrs. John F. Kennedy on behalf of The Children's Hearing and Speech Center general operating expenses.

MRS. FITZGERALD's magic is worked through the very gift she is giving so many afflicted children—speech. She uses her powers of persuasive speech to win over hard-headed business men and admiring friends.

She believes so sincerely in the cause to which she has been devoting three hours a day of her time, year in and year out, that it does not seem a miracle to her when an anonymous donor sends her a check for \$60,000.

She gets on the telephone and asks a friend or a stranger — to "adopt" an aphasic boy or girl. It will cost \$1240 to send a child to the Aphasic School for a year. For such slight cost, a miracle may be worked.

Take the case of two little boys, ages 7 and 8, who had been speechless from birth. After five months in the classrooms, they chatted

with one another by phone every night.

Or take the case of Jimmy, who was 6 years old, but could not speak a word. Two years later, Jimmy was doing regular school work in a regular school.

APHASIA is not well understood. There is a wide field for research here which the new school will provide.

It is believed to be damage to the central nervous system, which may have happened before or during

birth. Premature babies are often afflicted by it.

Edna K. Monsees, director of the school, describes aphasia this way:

"Aphasia, which means lack of speech, is easy to recognize in adults because it usually follows a stroke or some other accident involving the brain.

"In children, it may be the result of an accident or of an injury during or before birth, and it is far more difficult to recognize."

Mrs. FitzGerald leaves all

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of that to the experts. But she does add one discovery made at the school which could give wonderful hope to children now regarded as mentally retarded.

"Some of these children have been found to be aphasic," says Mrs. Fitzgerald. "Because they couldn't speak, they have been thought to be mentally retarded. But aphasic children are not mentally retarded. They are normal mentally. They have to be taught through new methods to speak."

Mrs. Fitzgerald became interested in children with speech and hearing problems 10 years ago when she suffered difficulties with her own hearing.

It was then that she offered to raise money for a children's hearing and speech center at Children's Hospital.

When the school for aphasic children opened four years ago, Mrs. Fitzgerald became an even more dedicated fairy godmother.

Even if the new building, located just a block away from Children's Hospital, will be able to up the present enrollment of 26 to 40, there will still be a waiting list.

"One of our most difficult tasks is to decide which child shall be admitted," she said. "It is heart-breaking to have to tell a family we cannot take their child, particularly when that family may have moved here in hopes of such help."

A picture story of the Children's Center — "New Hope for Children Who Cannot Speak" — appears in Potomac Magazine, Page 14.

MRS. DESMOND FITZGERALD
... the powers of persuasion

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